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STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**WASHINGTON STATE PATROL**

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**Guidelines for Off-Site Removal of Deceased Persons at Collisions**

Investigations at fatality traffic collisions frequently result in long road closures affecting thousands of motorists. During these investigations, it is important to balance the need to conduct thorough investigations with the need to respect the dignity and privacy of the decedent and the decedent's family. It is also important whenever reasonable to prevent on-lookers from viewing the deceased and to restore the flow of traffic as soon as possible.

When a fatality occurs at a traffic collision, it is considered a crime scene where appropriate law enforcement agencies are required to conduct a collision investigation. Furthermore, the King County Medical Examiner is responsible for conducting a scene death investigation.

The Washington State Patrol (WSP), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and the King County Medical Examiner (KCME) recognize there are times when extrication of deceased victims trapped inside vehicles is best accomplished at another location out of public view. In these cases, transporting the vehicle to another location maintains the privacy and dignity of the victim and the victim's family, provides a safer environment for Fire/EMS responders to perform the extrication and expedites reopening the roadway.

**THEREFORE**, WSP, WSDOT and the KCME have agreed to the following guidelines:

1. Upon identifying a collision or a scene where a death has occurred, the initial responding sergeant or incident commander will contact and advise the KCME within 15 minutes of his/her arrival at the scene. This will allow the KCME to make a timely response enabling a thorough on-scene investigation. The on-scene WSP supervisor will be the primary contact for scene and evidence coordination.

When off-site extrication of a decedent's remains is a possibility, paragraphs 2 through 6 below apply.

2. Law enforcement has jurisdiction over the scene. The KCME has jurisdiction over the decedent. The decision to remove a vehicle with a decedent inside for off-site extrication will be a mutual decision between the incident commander(s) and the KCME investigator.

3. If the decedent's vehicle is to be moved, WSDOT Incident Response personnel will securely tarp the vehicle to ensure the human remains are not visible and that no evidence and/or property is lost during transport.





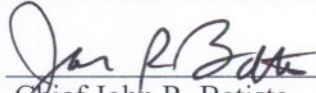
4. The vehicle will be transported on a flatbed transport vehicle to a mutually agreed upon facility for extricating the decedent out of public view.

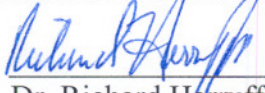
5. During transport, the KCME investigator and/or the investigating officer(s), if appropriate, will follow the transporting vehicle to the off-site facility to preserve the chain of evidence.

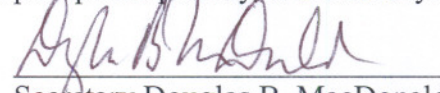
6. After the decedent has been removed from the vehicle, the investigating law enforcement agency will assume control of the vehicle for evidentiary and disposition purposes.

In addition, the King County Medical Examiner's Office will be responsible for establishing positive identification and notification of the legal next of kin. The release of decedents' names to the media and public will be the responsibility of the KCME. The KCME will contact the WSP as soon as identification has been confirmed and the legal next of kin has been contacted.

The KCME will continue to make traffic fatalities its top response priority in the county.

  
Chief John R. Batiste  
Washington State Patrol

  
Dr. Richard Harruff  
King County  
Medical Examiner

  
Secretary Douglas B. MacDonald  
Department of Transportation

Date: 4/19/07

Date: 10 Apr 07

Date: \_\_\_\_\_